

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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SUBJECT: SOVIET EVANGELICAL BAPTISTS SCORE COUP: THEIR
SAMIZDAT GOES PROFESSIONAL

REF: MOSCOW A-266

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QM WE HAVE RECIEVED 2 SAMPLES OF THE UNDERGROUND PUBLISHING EVENT

OF THE YEAR: THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE QUARTERLY VESTNIK ISTINY (HERALD OF TRUTH), PUBLISHED BY THE SOVIET UNION OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN BAPTIST CHURCHES AND PRINTED IN THE SOVIET UNION ON A CLANDESTINE PRESS.

2. THE PUBLICATION IS NOT A NEW ONE. ITS EDITORIAL MODESTLY EXPLAINS: "IS THIS A NEW JOURNAL? NO, IT IS NOT. ESSENTIALLY THIS IS THE WELL-KNOWN JOURNAL VESTNIK SPASENIY (HERALD OF SALVATION), WHICH IS NOW IN ITS FOURTEENTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION. BUT NOW, IN CONNECTION WITH ITS SHIFT FROM HECTOGRAPHIC TO TYPOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTION, FIRST, IT HAS BETTER LEGIBILITY, AND, SECONDLY, A NEW NAME THAT IS MORE APPROPRIATE TO ITS MISSION."

3. THE 32-PAGE PUBLICATION APPEARS IN PROFESSIONAL FORMAT AND QUALITY, FEATURING MULTICOLOR HEADINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS. IMPRINT ON BACK PAGE STATES THAT IT IS "PRINTED ON THE PRESS OF THE PUBLISHING HOUSE 'KHRISTIANIN'. DISTRIBUTED FREE OF CHARGE." CONTENT STRESSES FAMILIAR HOMILETIC THEMES OF EVANGELICAL BAPTISTS, BUT ALSO INCLUDES FOLLOWING ITEMS:
--UNDER HEADING "PRAY FOR THEM," PHOTOGRAPHS OF THREE IMPRISONED LEADERS OF YEKHB (EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN BAPTISTS): SECRETARY OF YEKHB COUNCIL (SOVIET) GEORGIY PETROVICH VINS, AND TWO COUNCIL MEMBERS NIKOLAY GEORGIYEVICH BATURIN AND PETR VASIL'YEVICH RUMACHIK, AS WELL AS APPEALS FOR PRAYERS FOR OTHER IMPRISONED BAPTISTS SUFFERING "UNBEARABLE" CONDITIONS IN CAMPS OF THE FAR NORTH BECAUSE OF "ILLEGAL 'ATTENTIONS' BY THE KGB."
--TEXT OF A LETTER WRITTEN FROM IRKUTSK PRISON IN SPRING 1975 BY VINS TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE YEKHB COUNCIL KRYUCHKOV, DESCRIBING HIS INTERROGATIONS AND KGB EFFORTS TO SOW DISTRUST AND DISUNITY AMONG EVANGELICAL BAPTISTS.
--TRANSLATION OF ARTICLE FROM THE PUBLICATION "CHRISTIANITY TODAY" FEATURING SPEECH BY BILLY GRAHAM AT AN "EVANGELICAL CONGRESS" IN AUG 1971.
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--EDITORIAL STATEMENT SOLICITING MANUSCRIPTS FOR PUBLICATION, INCLUDING DOCUMENTS AND LETTERS OF HISTORIC VALUE, AND PHOTOGRAPHS. EDITORS EXPRESS REGRET OVER THEIR INABILITY TO RETURN SUCH MATERIALS ("DUE TO WELL-KNOWN CIRCUMSTANCES") AND RESERVE RIGHT TO EDIT AND ABRIDGE CONTRIBUTIONS. MATERIALS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO "MEMBERS OF CHURCH COUNCIL OR REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS."

4. COPY OF ISSUE BEING POUCHED TO EUR/SOV.

5. COMMENT. DISSIDENT SOURCE FROM WHOM PUBLICATION WAS RECEIVED, ALTHOUGH NOT A BAPTIST, BEAMED WITH PRIDE OVER ACHIEVEMENT OF ONE SEGMENT OF SAMIZDAT, WHICH, IN EFFECT, HAS GONE PROFESSIONAL. THIS PUBLICATION WILL UNDOUBTELDDY GIVE IMPETUS TO PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN AND OTHER EFFORTS BEING CURRENTLY MOUNTED BY BAPTISTS, BALTIC ETHNIC GROUPS, AND OTHERS IN US ON BEHALF OF GEORGIY VINS. WE COMMEND ISSUE AS DRAMATIC DOCUMENTATION OF STUBBORN AND COURAGEOUS EFFORTS BY SOVIET BELIEVERS TO SURVIVE IN FACE OF OFFICIAL, ALBEIT COVERT REPRESSION. THIS PUBLISHING EVENT SHARPENS CONTINUING DILEMMA FOR SOVIET AUTHORITIES IN CHOICE OF TACTICS. THE "SOFT APPROACH" WAS RECENTLY REFLECTED IN ZNANIYE SOCIETY PUBLIC LECTURE (SEE REFAIR).AT THE SAME TIME, SOVIET AUTHORITIES HAVE A NOTORIOUS RECORD OF SUPPRESSING REPRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF "ANTI-SOVIET MATERIAL"--AND THEY CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO IGNORE CHALLENGE OF A CLANDESTINE PUBLISHING PLANT. THIS IS, OF COURSE, NOT THE FIRST ACQUISITION OF PRINTING FACILITIES BY A DISSIDENT GROUP,ALTHOUGH MOST RECENT INSTANCES HAVE SURFACED IN SAFER HAVENS LIKE GEORGIA. MATLOCK

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